I know where I stand, and yesterday, I made my voice heard.

First Lady Michelle Obama says

Last week, I cast my ballot for Barack Obama for President. That's right, yesterday -- I voted early by mail in my home state of Illinois. And this week Barack is going to vote early in person back home in Chicago.

We're voting early because we're ready to keep building on the progress we've made together for another four years – and with opportunities to vote early in so many states, there's no reason to wait.

Voting early is quick and convenient. It means you don't have to worry about your schedule filling up, or getting sick, or having to work late on Election Day. And more than anything, it means you can act – right now – to move our country forward. That's why I voted early by mail. I know how important this election is. And the truth is, even if Barack weren't my husband, I'd be supporting him because of who he is and where he's going to take this country.

As First Lady, I have seen firsthand what being President really looks like. I've seen how the issues that come across a President's desk are always the hard ones – decisions that aren't just about the bottom line, but about laying a foundation for the next generation. I've seen how important it is to have a President who doesn't just tell us what we want to hear, but who tells us the truth, even when it's hard – especially when it's hard. And I've seen that when it comes time to make those tough calls, and everyone's urging you to do what's easy, or what polls best, or what gets good headlines, as President, you need to be driven by the struggles, hopes, and dreams of all the people you serve. You need to be committed to lifting up every single American.

And since the day he took office, on issue after issue, crisis after crisis, that's what we've seen in my husband. We've got to remember how, when Barack first took office, the economy was collapsing and a lot of folks wondered whether we were headed for a second Great Depression.

But Barack acted swiftly, cutting taxes for small businesses and working families. Instead of listening to those who said we should let the American auto industry go bankrupt, Barack had the backs of American workers – and today, the auto industry is back on its feet.

So while we still have a long way to go to completely rebuild our economy, there are more and more signs that we are headed in the right direction. The stock market has doubled. Exports have grown by 45 percent. Manufacturers have added half a million jobs. And we’ve had 31 straight months of private sector job growth, totaling 5.2 million new jobs right here in America.

Meanwhile, as he was working to rescue our economy, Barack was also working to reform our health care system. Because of that reform, seniors are saving hundreds of dollars on their prescriptions, young people can stay on their parents’ insurance until they’re 26 years old, and insurance companies will no longer be able to discriminate against you because of a pre-existing condition like asthma or diabetes.

Barack has moved us forward in so many other ways as well. He made college more affordable by doubling funding for Pell Grants and keeping student loan interest rates down. He ended the Iraq War, did away with Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, and he made the decision to take out Osama bin Laden. Because of Barack, young immigrants who came to this country through no fault of their own no longer have to live in fear of being deported from the only country they’ve ever called home.

And again and again, Barack has stood up for women. The first bill he signed helps women get equal pay for equal work. And he has made it clear that he will always fight to ensure that we can make our own decisions about our bodies and our health care.

So the choice we face in this election is clear: We can go back to the same, failed policies of the past – or we can continue the progress we’ve made and keep our country moving forward.

I know where I stand, and yesterday, I made my voice heard. So I want to ask you to vote – and vote early – for Barack, so that together, we can keep growing this economy out from the middle class, so that everyone’s got a fair shot, no matter who they are, what they look like, or who they love.

If you’ve got any questions about where or when you can vote in your neighborhood, go to Vote.BarackObama.Com to find out everything you need to know to cast your ballot.